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FOR IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE

Montana Campus Compact Campus Corps Students Help Prevent Diabetes Proliferation on Fort Peck Indian Reservation

On the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Wolf Point, MT, three Fort Peck Community College students and MTCC Campus Corps members Jake Riediger, Connor Gourneau and Scott Smoker are working in conjunction with the FPCC-Popular Wellness Center to mentor and educate their community about steps that can be taken to prevent and manage diabetes.

The 18 and 19-year-old Native American men develop and disseminate educational materials, participate in advocacy activities, and act as health and exercise advisors to diabetics on their reservation. They work one-to-one with FPCC-Poplar Wellness Center patrons, focusing primarily on youth mentorship and healthy lifestyle education for between 75-150 community members each day (70% of which have diabetes), and according to Judy Linthicum, Wellness Center Director, act as drug and alcohol free role models for dozens of youth in the community.

“Young boys on the reservation look up to them and see them as heroes,” Linthicum said. “It’s difficult to find positive male role models here and these young men are just that.”

In addition, the Montana Campus Corps members work with the Spotted Bull Treatment Center and Fort Peck Transitional Living Unit, the latter of which made 2,566 separate visits to the Center in 2005-2006.

According to the American Diabetes Association, 20.8 million children and adults in the United States have diabetes, and 50% of Native American adults have diabetes.

The Montana Campus Compact (MTCC) programs benefit community members such as low-income families, the elderly, at-risk youth, and migrant and minority groups, by supporting civic engagement activities including community service, service-learning and building campus-community partnerships. MTCC is the only statewide higher education organization whose primary purpose is to prepare the next generation of informed, active, committed citizen leaders for Montana.

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